

A Fulfilled Christian Life, Part 3 - Romans 12:3 – December 9th, 2012

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series titled; "A Fulfilled Christian Life," and by way of introduction, I'd like to begin with a question.
- Here it is, on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being a joy filled and fulfilled life in Christ, what would you rate your Christian experience currently?
- I'll take it a step further and ask another question as a second part to the first, which is simply this, why is it that you rate your life as such?

- What if I told you that living a miserable Christian life, instead of a joyful Christian life is not what God ever intended or planned for you.
- If the truth be known, it is God's desire that every single one of us rate our Christian lives as a 10, and anything less than that isn't His will.
- While I'm keenly aware that this is a very bold statement, perhaps you'll consider these scriptures, starting with the first one in Psalm 16.

Psalms 16:11 NKJV You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

- Actually, this explains why the enemy will stop at nothing and try everything to rob us of that fullness of joy. Consider the Saviors words: **John 10:10 NIV** *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

- After Ezra read from the Pentateuch, the Israelites began to weep and mourn in their godly sorrow, only to have Nehemiah respond in 8:10. **Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV** Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this day is* holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

- After David had horribly sinned against God in committing adultery with Bathseba, and murdering her husband Uriah, David begs for joy. **Psalms 51:9-12 KJV** Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. (10) Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (11) Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. (12) Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.

- I believe the best description of what a fulfilled Christian life really looks like, is found in the Apostle Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia. **Galatians 5:22-23 NIV** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- Then there's what I see as the most paradoxical passage concerning a joyful Christian life that's found in the Epistle of James 1:2-4. **James 1:2-4 NIV** Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, (3) because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (4) Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- Please know that I in no way wish to suggest that if you're going through a major trial in your life, you're supposed to somehow fane joy.
- Rather, what I am suggesting is that even in the midst of those trials in life, I can still have and live a joy filled and fulfilled Christian life.
- How so? Enter the Apostle Paul, who by the Holy Spirit, will rise from the pages of our Bibles to show us how it is that this is even possible.

1. By laying my life down for Him (Verse 1)

- v1 Paul says therefore in light of God's mercy to offer our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God as our spiritual act of worship.

2. By renewing my mind in Him (Verse 2)

- v2 Paul says conform no longer to the worlds pattern. Be transformed by renewing of your mind to prove what God's perfect will is for you.

3. By living humbly before Him (Verse 3)

- v3 He says think not more highly of yourself than you ought, rather think of yourself with sober judgment according to the faith God gives.
- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is, it seems to indicate that humility comes vis-à-vis God's measured gift.
- Let me explain, the humility in my life will be directly proportionate to, and measured by, how much God has given to me, namely faith.

"...Paul is saying we ought all to measure ourselves by the standard God has given, which is 'faith.' 'Faith' is the measuring standard for self-regard. And 'faith' is shorthand for remembering that I owe God everything and have no reason to boast."

- When you see it and say it like that, it brings verse three into a much clearer focus in that humility comes by virtue of knowing I can't boast.
- In other words, I can't think more highly of myself than I ought because everything that I have, and everything that I am came from God.
- Even my salvation came from Him, and not myself, such that it was both given and received as a gift, not something I earned, lest I boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— (9) not by works, so that no one can boast.

- Bear with me for just a bit because there's more here than meets the eye as it relates to how prone we are to think too highly of ourselves.
- Here's what I'm thinking, when I fancy myself as being something or someone I'm not, I will think that I am somehow deserving, and owed.
- By that I mean that I will think that I have earned the right to be the recipient of that which I perceive that I'm owed, i.e. respect, a wage, etc.

- Conversely, when I realize that I have only been the recipient of that which I did not work for, earn or deserve, I can't take pride in the gift.
- I think that there's not a one of us who would agree that receiving a gift is not humbling. Receiving isn't very pride friendly, but giving is!
- Perhaps it's for this reason that it's more blessed to give than to receive. However, that's not to say that it's not a blessing to be receiving.

- This of course presupposes that the one who is on the receiving end sees what they receive as a gift and not something they worked for.
- By way of illustration, with Christmas fast approaching, who of us upon receiving a gift would tell the giver in response that they earned it?
- If I work for the gift, then it would cease to be a gift and instead become a wage. The problem is that the only wage I have coming is death.

- This because, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. This brings me to where I wish to close.
- In a sentence, "to be humble is to be grateful, and to be grateful is to be fulfilled, however, to be haughty is to be ungrateful, and unfulfilled."
- Would to God, we are numbered amongst those of whom it is said; they think of themselves nothing, having received from God everything.